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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to identify the behaviors of community college faculty that contribute to student persistence and transfer. Using individual and group interviews in a grounded theory approach, teacher behaviors were analyzed from the perspectives of students, faculty, and administrators. Interviews with transfer students who were currently enrolled at or had recently graduated from a university (n=40) were conducted through small focus groups and by phone, while faculty (n=21) and administrators (n=16) from three community colleges were interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Three core categories emerged as foundations for explaining faculty behaviors: (1) in the perceptions of all three groups, the faculty perform their roles in a context characterized by conflict, arising from the colleges' emphasis on achievement, from the diverse levels of preparation of their students, and from their own low status within the higher education hierarchy; (2) the interactions of all three groups require negotiation and flexibility; and (3) community college faculty function in relationship to four perceived roles (i.e., managers of learning, models of the profession, members of the college community, and bearers of academic standards). The study concluded that faculty react to the tensions between academic quality and open access in ways that tend to emphasize one mission over the other, selecting their position based on several influential factors. An extensive literature review, implications for further study, data tables, and a 208-item bibliography are included. (MAB)

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